

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF MINNESOTA

YAHIA M. ABUSHAQRA,

Civil No. 05-2470 (ADM/FLN)

Petitioner,

v.

**REPORT AND
RECOMMENDATION**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Respondent.

THIS MATTER is before the undersigned United States Magistrate Judge on Petitioner's application for habeas corpus relief under 28 U.S.C. § 2241. The case has been referred to this Court for report and recommendation pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636 and Local Rule 72.1. For the reasons discussed below, it is recommended that the petition for writ of habeas corpus be summarily dismissed pursuant to Rule 4 of The Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases In The United States District Courts.¹

I. BACKGROUND

Petitioner is currently serving a 75-month prison sentence at the Federal Correctional Institution in Waseca, Minnesota. Petitioner's sentence was imposed in December 2001 in the United States District Court for the Western District of Missouri, after he pleaded guilty to a federal criminal offense, (the nature of which is not disclosed in the

¹ Rule 4 provides that "[i]f it plainly appears from the petition and any attached exhibits that the petitioner is not entitled to relief in the district court, the judge must dismiss the petition and direct the clerk to notify the petitioner." Although The Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases are most directly applicable to habeas petitions filed by state prisoners pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254, they also may be applied to habeas cases brought under 28 U.S.C. § 2241. Rule 1(b); Mickelson v. United States, Civil No. 01-1750 (JRT/SRN), (D.Minn. 2002), 2002 WL 31045849 at *2; Bostic v. Carlson, 884 F.2d 1267, 1270, n.1, (9th Cir. 1989); Rothstein v. Pavlick, No. 90 C 5558 (N.D.Ill. 1990), 1990 WL 171789 at *3.

present petition). (Petition, [Docket No. 1], p. 2, ¶s 1-5.) Petitioner did not challenge his conviction or sentence by filing a direct appeal or a motion for post-conviction relief under 28 U.S.C. § 2255. (Id., p. 2, ¶ 7, p. 3, ¶ 10.)

In his present § 2241 habeas corpus petition, Petitioner is challenging the sentence imposed by the trial court in his federal criminal case. Petitioner claims that he could have been granted a “downward departure” at sentencing, if he had waived his right to an “administrative deportation hearing.” He further claims that he would have “waived his right to the administrative proceeding and agreed to be deported without necessity of having a hearing in exchang[e] for a four-level downward departure.” (Petition, Memorandum of Law, p. 2.) These claims, however, cannot be raised and decided in a § 2241 habeas corpus proceeding.

II. DISCUSSION

As a general rule, a federal prisoner can maintain a collateral challenge to his conviction or sentence only by filing a motion in the trial court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2255. Abdullah v. Hedrick, 392 F.3d 957, 959 (8th Cir. 2004), cert. denied, 125 S.Ct. 2984 (2005).

The fifth paragraph of § 2255 provides that

“[a]n application for a writ of habeas corpus in behalf of a prisoner who is authorized to apply for relief by motion pursuant to this section [i.e., § 2255], shall not be entertained if it appears that the applicant has failed to apply for relief, by motion, to the court which sentenced him, or that such court has denied him relief, unless it also appears that the remedy by motion is inadequate or ineffective to test the legality of his detention.”

In effect, a motion brought in the trial court under § 2255 is the exclusive remedy available to a federal prisoner who is asserting a collateral challenge to his conviction or sentence. “It is well settled a collateral challenge to a federal conviction or sentence must

generally be raised in a motion to vacate filed in the sentencing court under § 2255... and not in a habeas petition filed in the court of incarceration... under § 2241." Hill v. Morrison, 349 F.3d 1089, 1091 (8th Cir. 2003). No court has jurisdiction to hear such a collateral challenge under 28 U.S.C. § 2241, unless the petitioner has affirmatively demonstrated that the remedy provided by § 2255 "is inadequate or ineffective to test the legality of...[his] detention." DeSimone v. Lacy, 805 F.2d 321, 323 (8th Cir. 1986) (per curiam), quoting 28 U.S.C. § 2255. See also Von Ludwitz v. Ralston, 716 F.2d 528, 529 (8th Cir. 1983) (per curiam) (same). The "inadequate or ineffective remedy" exception is sometimes called the "savings clause," (Abdullah, 392 F.3d at 959), because when it applies, it can save a § 2241 habeas petition from being dismissed under the § 2255 exclusive remedy rule.

In this case, it is readily apparent that Petitioner is challenging the validity of his federal criminal sentence. He is seeking an order that would vacate his existing sentence, and cause him to be re-sentenced with a "four-level downward departure." Thus, the present petition is barred by § 2255's exclusive remedy rule, unless the savings clause applies here.

In some cases, a § 2241 petition that is barred by the exclusive remedy rule can simply be construed to be a motion brought under § 2255. The matter can then be transferred to the trial court judge so the prisoner's claims can be addressed on the merits there. Here, however, Petitioner is precluded from seeking relief under § 2255, because of the one-year statute of limitations that applies to such motions. 28 U.S.C. § 2255 [¶6]. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to construe the present habeas petition to be a § 2255 motion, and then transfer the matter back to the trial court.

Furthermore, it is clear that Petitioner deliberately elected to seek relief under the § 2241 habeas corpus statute. He apparently believes that the remedy provided by § 2255 is “inadequate or ineffective to test the legality” of his sentence, and that he should be allowed to seek relief under § 2241, pursuant to the savings clause. The Court disagrees.

The procedural rules that limit the opportunity to seek relief under § 2255, including the one-year statute of limitations, would be rendered meaningless if a prisoner who is procedurally barred from bringing a § 2255 motion could simply argue that the remedy provided by that statute has become “inadequate or ineffective,” and that he should therefore be allowed to bring his claims in a § 2241 habeas corpus petition. Congress could not have intended for the procedural restrictions on § 2255 motions to be so easily evaded. Thus, the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals has expressly confirmed that § 2255 will not be viewed as inadequate or ineffective “merely because § 2255 relief has already been denied,... or because petitioner has been denied permission to file a second or successive § 2255 motion... or because a second or successive § 2255 motion has been dismissed, ... or because petitioner has allowed the one year statute of limitations and/or grace period to expire.” United States v. Lurie, 207 F.3d 1075, 1077 (8th Cir. 2000) (citations omitted). See also Hill, 349 F.3d at 1091 (“in order to establish a remedy is ‘inadequate or ineffective’ under § 2255, there must be more than a procedural barrier to bringing a § 2255 petition”); Abdullah, 392 F.3d at 959 (“§ 2255 is not inadequate or ineffective merely because the claim was previously raised in a § 2255 motion and denied, or because a remedy under that section is time-barred”); United States ex rel Perez v. Warden, FMC Rochester, 286 F.3d 1059, 1061-62 (8th Cir.) (reaffirming that § 2255 is not rendered inadequate or ineffective by operation of the rules limiting successive § 2255 motions), cert. denied, 537

U.S. 869 (2002).

“A federal prisoner should be permitted to seek habeas corpus [under § 2241] only if he had no reasonable opportunity to obtain earlier judicial correction of a fundamental defect in his conviction or sentence because the law changed after his first 2255 motion.” In re: Davenport, 147 F.3d 605, 611 (7th Cir. 1998). In other words, “§ 2255 is not inadequate or ineffective,” thereby allowing a prisoner to challenge his conviction or sentence in a § 2241 habeas corpus petition, “where a petitioner had any opportunity to present his claim beforehand.” Abdullah, 392 F.3d at 963. Applying this rule here, the Court finds that Petitioner is not eligible for habeas corpus relief under 28 U.S.C. § 2241, because he had a reasonable opportunity to raise his current claims for relief in a direct appeal, or in a timely § 2255 motion. He cannot now claim that § 2255 is “inadequate or ineffective” simply because he failed to make use of either of those opportunities. See Hill, 349 F.3d at 1092 (§ 2255 is not an inadequate or ineffective remedy where the prisoner had “at least two opportunities to raise [his] argument before the sentencing court”).

Petitioner cannot overcome the § 2255 exclusive remedy rule merely by claiming that he was previously unaware of his current claims. For purposes of determining whether the savings clause can be applied to avoid the exclusive remedy rule, the issue is whether Petitioner had an opportunity to present his claims earlier – not whether he was aware of his claims earlier. As the Court pointed out in Abdullah –

“[T]he Due Process Clause of our Constitution does not require that a petitioner have more than one unobstructed procedural opportunity to challenge his conviction. ‘That does not mean he took the shot, or even that he or his attorney recognized the shot was there for the taking. All the Constitution requires, if it requires that much, is that the procedural opportunity have existed.’”

392 F.3d at 963, quoting Wolford v. Scott, 177 F.3d 1236, 1244 (11th Cir. 1999).

Here, as in Abdullah, Petitioner had an opportunity to present his current claims for relief on direct appeal, and in a timely § 2255 motion. Petitioner contends that he was not able to take advantage of those opportunities, because he was not aware of his current claims; but that does not alter the fact that the remedy provided by § 2255 was available to Petitioner, and that § 2255 could have been used to present the claims that he is now attempting to present here. In short, the remedy provided by § 2255 was entirely adequate for Petitioner's present claims, but he just did not take advantage of that remedy. See Abdullah, 392 F.3d at 960 ("§ 2255 was not inadequate or ineffective to raise Abdullah's claim because... Abdullah did have an unobstructed opportunity to raise his claim").

Because the remedy provided by § 2255 afforded Petitioner a suitable opportunity to raise his current claims for relief, the savings clause does not apply here. Petitioner is therefore barred from bringing his current claims in a § 2241 habeas corpus petition, and this action must be summarily dismissed for lack of jurisdiction. See DeSimone, 805 F.2d at 323-24 (§ 2241 habeas petition challenging prior criminal conviction was properly dismissed for lack of subject matter jurisdiction, where petitioner had not demonstrated that § 2255 motion was an inadequate or ineffective remedy); Abdullah, 392 F.3d at 964 ("[b]ecause Abdullah did not show that § 2255 was inadequate or ineffective, the district court correctly concluded that it had no jurisdiction to consider his claim in a § 2241 petition").

III. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the foregoing, and all the files, records and proceedings herein,

IT IS HEREBY RECOMMENDED that:

Petitioner's application for habeas corpus relief under 28 U.S.C. § 2241, (Docket No. 1), be DISMISSED for lack of jurisdiction.

Dated: October 28, 2005

s/ Franklin L. Noel
FRANKLIN L. NOEL
United States Magistrate Judge

Pursuant to the Local Rules, any party may object to this Report and Recommendation by filing with the Clerk of Court and serving on all parties, on or before **November 17, 2005**, written objections which specifically identify the portions of the proposed findings or recommendations to which objection is being made, and a brief in support thereof. A party may respond to the objecting party's brief within ten days after service thereof. All briefs filed under the rules shall be limited to 3500 words. A judge shall make a de novo determination of those portions to which objection is made. This Report and Recommendation does not constitute an order or judgment of the District Court, and it is, therefore, not appealable to the Circuit Court of Appeals.